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ABSTRACT

Rising housing costs, increased homelessness, and the debate over illegal immigrants residing in publically assisted housing have renewed media and public interest in immigration's contribution to the Los Angeles, California area's problems of scarce low-cost housing, homelessness, and housing code violations. Recent data suggest that immigrants are disproportionately both the victims of and contributors to the housing crisis, although the problems are also aggravated by commercial conversion of low-cost housing, stagnating federal aid, and diminished tax and loan incentives. As the Los Angeles percentage of poverty-level residents has risen, the area's low-cost housing has become more scarce and increasingly costly. Mexico's and Latin America's problems continue to encourage an increase of immigrants, whose powerlessness has allowed unscrupulous landlords to rent properties to them that violate codes of safety and zoning. Suggestions for improvements include: (1) increased coordination between immigration and urban development policies; (2) rigorous immigrant screening for publicly assisted housing entitlements; (3) a national level concern and assistance; (4) policies to help ease the clustering of immigrants in major urban centers; (5) a reduction in low-wage, labor intensive urban industries that depend on foreign labor; and (6) stronger anti-housing discrimination laws, housing code enforcement, and assistance to newly legalized citizens in asserting tenants' rights. (JHP)

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IMMIGRATION AND THE LOW-COST HOUSING CRISIS: THE LOS ANGELES AREA'S EXPERIENCE

by

John Nielsen

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IMMIGRATION AND THE LOW-COST HOUSING SHORTAGE:

THE LOS ANGELES AREA'S EXPERIENCE

By John Nielsen

Despite the indisputable effects of population growth on housing demand, the relationship between housing and immigration has rarely been explored in depth, even in Los Angeles, the nation's premier host to immigrants. "Most studies of Mexican immigration have ignored housing patterns," the San Diego-based Center for U.S.-Mexico Studies concluded in 1982.[1] In 1985, the Rand Corporation's "Current and Future Effects of Mexican Immigration in California" mentioned housing only in passing.[2]

The 1979-1981 Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, which otherwise produced exhaustive studies, disregarded housing. Leading studies of illegal aliens' social services use such as North-Houstoun (1976), Weintraub and Cardenas (1984), Van Arsdol (1979) and a study by San Diego County's Human Resources Agency (1977) largely ignored publicly assisted housing, a major federal budget item that has averaged over $10 billion a year nationally in the 1980s and an additional $10 billion for shelter grants to welfare clients.

The Urban Institute's thorough 1985 study, "The Fourth Wave: California's Newest Immigrants," discussed briefly various Mexican neighborhoods in Los Angeles. The study found that nearly 45 percent of their inhabitants were foreign born. Percentage of units that were owner-occupied ranged from 65 percent in Pacoima to only 7 percent in East Los Angeles. The study found many single family units in East Los Angeles sheltered multiple households, with more than one-third of all housing meeting the definition of overcrowded (more than one person per room.)[3]

But heavy flows of immigrants in the 1980s have heightened public interest in the immigration angle of the housing woes of Los Angeles, where two decades earlier the housing stock seemed inexhaustible. In the last year, the press has carried a series of reports on the rapid growth of a so-called shadow-market of illegal, overcrowded, substandard housing in the United States and in southern California, where the shadow market appears to be dominated by poor, low-skill immigrants.

Increasingly, media coverage shows immigrants to be not only victims of housing shortages, but an aggravating factor in them. In recent years, the press has carried reports of raids by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) on immigrants living under freeway on-ramps, of immigrants living in cars, tents, storage units and caves, and of immigrants packed densely into tiny homes and apartments.[4]

Congressman Romano Mazzoli's Subcommittee on Immigration noted this trend as early as 1981 in a fact-finding visit to Southern California:

> The cities of Santa Ana and Long Beach in Orange County are both experiencing serious housing problems due to the presence of large numbers of refugees and undocumented aliens.
>
> While substantial residential redevelopment activity is currently taking place in both cities, the existing housing shortage has forced many refugee families to "double or triple up."
>
> This has resulted in numerous housing code violations in the form of illegal occupancy, as well as unsafe and overcrowded living conditions. For example, in one 90-day period 237 overcrowded conditions were reported to housing authorities. One case involved 62 Indochinese refugees residing in one dwelling unit -- including 36 in the garage.
>
> The practice of sleeping on the floor in shifts was reported to be commonplace. Other problems cited by officials were: construction of tin shacks in yards; unsafe cooking procedures; lack of proper ventilation, heating and plumbing in many units; and sleeping quarters arranged in kitchens and garages.
>
> An official in Long Beach presented a similar picture. He stated that, while the housing impact in Long Beach "has not been accurately estimated," it obviously compounds the housing shortage problem -- a problem already exacerbated by the increasing number of Naval personnel being assigned to Long Beach. Further, the lower rents available there were cited as a magnet encouraging refugees with lower incomes to settle in the city.[5]

The 1982 study of the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies cited research showing acute crowding among Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles:

> The impact of temporary, non-agricultural Mexican migrants on housing stocks is greater but is reduced somewhat by shared living arrangements. In low-rent areas of downtown Los Angeles it is not uncommon to find a single, two or three-room apartment being shared by six or more male workers, usually relatives or people fromthe same hometown in Mexico. In smaller cities, groups of undocumented men frequently rent "single-family houses in order to reduce their individual housing costs.[6]

The Center noted research showing high housing densities among Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles and San Diego -- about two people per occupied room. While noting the absence of studies, the Center's report concluded that Mexican migrants are a major factor in the housing markets of cities such as Los Angeles and Santa Ana. "Their presence has undoubtedly contributed to the inflation of rents in some neighborhoods. The magnitude and distribution of these effects remain unknown."[7]

Los Angeles' Huddling Newcomers -- In disturbing detail, the Los Angeles Times in the summer of 1987 described the region's "garage people."[8] Working from a survey of 500 randomly-chosen residences in the county, the Times concluded that there may be as many as 200,000 people living illegally in converted garages in the area, paying rents of $300 or more per month. Though conditions in these living units varied, most were found to have little or no plumbing, heating or windows. Extension cords to nearby homes were often the source of power. Unhealthful, unsafe conditions were the norm.

According to the Times, the boom in "garage people" is almost exclusively an Hispanic phenomenon, found largely "in a swathe of mostly low-income Latino neighborhoods from Sylmar through East Los Angeles into Long Beach, with pockets in the east San Gabriel Valley, central Orange County and San Diego."

These findings were echoed later in the summer in a series of articles in the Orange County Register, which studied substandard housing in Orange County. Though the Register series made no systematic estimates, it too described this underground housing market as the province of immigrants, particularly Hispanics.[9]

Evidence of severe housing problems among some immigrants emerged in Los Angeles City Council hearings in 1986, held to debate a proposed crackdown on overcrowding. At these hearings, witnesses linked exceptionally high levels of tuberculosis to overcrowding in the city's densely-packed urban core, where low-income immigrants predominate.[10]

Undocumented Tenants in Publicly-Assisted Housing -- Meantime, there is no space in the city's public housing. Testifying at the Los Angeles City Council's Committee on Public Health and Human Resources in April 1986, Los Angeles public housing officials estimated that illegal aliens could be occupying more than 30 percent of Southern California's 500,000 units. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) waited from 1981 to the end of 1987 for a congressional go-ahead on a legislatively-mandated regulation to evict illegal aliens from federally-assisted housing or to require them to pay rents at market rates. No precise numbers exist of those in Los Angeles that could have been affected, but the New York City Bar Association claims that nearly 40 percent of households that are publicly assisted nationwide -- some four million -- have at least one illegal alien tenant.[11]

In the Housing and Community Development Act enacted in late 1987, Congress reaffirmed the ban on housing assistance to illegal aliens and the requirement for a check on the immigration status of aliens seeking assistance. In the same act, Congress, however, blocked the planned rule on blanket eviction of illegals, and gave local housing authorities discretion (a) to allow illegal alien tenants to remain if necessary to avoid separating families; and (b) to defer eviction for up to three years to undocumented tenants to

find alternative housing with official assistance, if needed. For now, however, all subsidized units are full, and most waiting lists are clogged.

Finally, there are signs that homelessness has grown. Estimates of the number of homeless in Los Angeles range from 11,000 (according to a spokesman for the city) to 50,000 (according to some advocacy groups), with HUD's estimate of 33,000 widely accepted as the most accurate.[12] A recent study by the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that homelessness as measured by demand for services has increased faster in Los Angeles since 1986 than in any other city in the country.[13] And though descriptions of the "typically" homeless vary widely, a substantial portion of them is foreign born.

According to a 1983 Census analysis prepared by, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) immigrants to Los Angeles are hard hit by the crisis in housing. Finding almost 75 percent of new immigrants to the area to be minority households with low incomes, the report concluded that these same immigrants were far more likely than others to live in overcrowded enclaves, paying disproportionately high percentages of their income as rent. Since 1970, these enclaves have expanded "dramatically" in size, the report concludes. Regionally, Hispanic groups were at least three times more likely to live in overcrowded conditions than other groups, and 15 times more likely to live in these conditions than whites. More than half of all Hispanic households identified as recent immigrants were found to live in overcrowded conditions.[14]

How did this come to pass, and what do these trends portend? An examination of national trends in both housing and immigration, and the manner in which each has come to complicate the other, may help yield answers.

Background: The Housing Crisis and Immigration Trends -- Low-income rental housing is in increasingly scarce throughout the country for several reasons. Few large inexpensive housing projects have been built since the early seventies, when the baby boom fizzled, and the "Yuppie" market emerged as the choice target of builders. Newer apartments and homes are now smaller just as the "typical" family is smaller. Rents and prices have risen in fits and starts, fed by shortages of land, ballooning costs and speculative fervor, and in few places more than California cities. Builders, complaining of prohibitive costs, have gradually moved away from low-income projects in favor of high-end ventures. Tax incentives and loan structures that once supported low-income construction have all but disappeared. The 1986 tax reforms took nearly $60 billion in tax benefits out of the housing and real estate industry. Federal housing budgets have declined under the Reagan administration -- from 5.3 percent of the federal budget in 1980 to 1.3 percent in 1987.

Meantime, the country is devouring its existing low-income housing. In many cities, poor, older neighborhoods have been "gentrified," and ratcheted up in price. In other areas these same units have been cleared for commercial development, or for municipal infrastructure ranging from airports and freeways to prisons. Run-ups in

land prices tempt unscrupulous landlords to "milk" older units, by sitting and waiting, ignoring the complaints of tenants, then razing and building for a profit. Activists complain that "redevelopment" frequently means replacing those in need with those with money.

All these trends have helped shrink the nation's network of subsidized rental housing at a rapid rate. HUD has scaled itself down considerably over the last several years, supporting fewer and fewer low-income ventures. The large, permanent "projects" that sprouted until the late sixties in many urban areas have become anathema to many, often viewed as spawning grounds for drugs and crime. "Sunset clauses" that encouraged many builders to set aside a percentage of new units for low-income residents are expiring steadily, and those units are being lost.

Set against the findings of the 1980 Census, these changes are unencouraging. While low-income housing is disappearing, the percentage of the country's population defined as poor has risen, to nearly 15 percent from 12 percent in 1970. The number of renter households with real incomes below $10,000 increased by 40 percent in the decade 1974-1983. The composition of the impoverished is also changing, according to a recent report commissioned and issued by the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation:

> "WHEREAS in the 1960s the poor included a large number of intact families and elderly persons, most of the current poor families consist of single parents and their children. WHEREAS in the past the poor population included many who are poor only briefly as a result of some special misfortune, the present poor population seems increasingly permanent."
>
> Nationally, 78 percent of families earning less than $7,000 per year are already spending more than 35 percent of their income for rent. Sometime during the last ten years, the Neighborhood Reinvestment report concludes, we went from "a situation of near balance between affordable (low-income) units and the number of households that needed them to a present and projected shortage of affordable units."[15]

Does heavy immigration in an area such as Los Angeles aggravate these negative trends? First, many of the area's new immigrants are at or near the poverty level. But there are several other reasons why immigrants have heightened pressures on the low-income housing market and have been among the hardest hit by shortages.

- According to the 1980 Census, immigrant families tend to be larger than the national average, and thus more vulnerable to trends towards smaller rental units, and destruction of larger dwellings. A 1985 Current Population Survey shows that over 75 percent of Hispanic families have three or more persons, compared to less than 60 percent of non-Hispanic families.

- A large percentage of southern California's foreign born has little money or credit and limited English skills. They are thus more likely to be exploited as competition for low-income housing stiffens. Credit and background are particularly threatening for illegal aliens.

- Los Angeles-Orange County epitomizes the trend for most low-skill immigrants to be drawn by ethnic and job networks to urban areas where housing costs are already high and shortages most severe. New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. are also high housing cost areas with sizable immigrant settlement. These cities are often centers for low-wage industries and service-related jobs. In the 1970s the Los Angeles area drew nearly 600,000 immigrant workers into predominantly low-wage manufacturing and service occupations. In part because of the rush of immigrants, wages of Hispanics in those industries lagged 20 to 40 percent behind the national average. But during the same period costs of rental housing rose rapidly, far faster than other items in the area's consumer price index.[16]

- Hispanics in particular are already acknowledged to be among the nation's the most poorly housed groups. HUD studies in Phoenix, Denver and Dallas suggest that housing discrimination against Hispanic is pervasive.[17] While black Americans are the most frequent discrimination victims, Hispanic rights advocates have noted that rental restrictions on families with children has had a disproportionate impact on the Hispanic community.

The End of Los Angeles' Housing Cornucopia -- Los Angeles is a laboratory for studies of both immigration and housing. The city and the surrounding region share all of the housing woes of other urban areas in this country, while adding a few of their own. Not coincidentally, the region is also host to more than one-fifth of all immigrants[18] and nearly one-third of all illegal immigrants to the United States.[19]

Growth has been a way of life in Los Angeles. For a century the city has been known for its elastic borders. Real estate booms have drawn people to the region since the 1880s, when the Union and Pacific Railroads fought to bring customers west. Though fitful, this growth has been explosive, particularly since the end of World War II. On the average, the region gained 250,000 residents a year during the 1950s and 1960s, which is far beyond the national average. Growth slowed during the recession years of 1970-1975, but quickly picked up after that. Regional SCAG projections call for a 2.1 rate of growth until the end of the century. By 2010 the region's population is expected to increase by 57 percent,[20] as opposed to a 24 percent increase for the country as a whole.

Before the recession of the 1970s, these patterns of growth dovetailed well with the needs of those seeking shelter. Migrating American families came west to look for middle-class homes and life-styles. The housing stock was newer then and remarkably sub-urban. Los Angeles was called a group of "suburbs in search of a city." The economic base seemed secure and growth was hailed.

But growth in the 1970s and 1980s has become a different story. Now competing with the drive for expansion are numerous "slow-growth" movements, themselves political expressions of increasing shortages of land and water and severe congestion and traffic problems. Tradi-tional middle-class in-migration of Americans has been eclipsed by the influx of low-skilled newcomers from Mexico and Central America, with smaller and more varied groups arriving primarily from Asia, and by the secondary migration of earlier refugees and immigrants. As immi-grants poured into the Los Angeles area, the Urban Institute found, more blue collar citizens, largely whites and some Hispanics, left than entered, and the rate of in-migration of black Americans slowed. More than any other city in the country, Los Angeles is now being studied for the effects of this "internationalization."

Conservative SCAG estimates suggest that immigration to this region ran at 123,000 per year between 1975 and 1980, with the vast majority of those newcomers (80 p[illegible]cent) settling in Los Angeles. By other estimates, nearly a quarter of this country's 720,000 yearly net growth of the foreign born population in the 1980s estimated by Census researchers[26] has been settling in the greater Los Angeles area.

Some have compared this recent immigration to the wave that passed through Ellis Island at the turn of the century, when huge numbers of low-skill European families arrived on the eastern sea-board. Others see major differences, noting that earlier immigration was mostly legal, that a single language and culture did not predomi-nate so heavily among the newcomers, and that the economy of the early twentieth century had a far greater need for masses of low-skill workers.

Whatever the validity of these comparisons, changing circum-stances are redefining the relationship between immigration and housing. For Los Angeles is is less able now than in the past to house huge numbers of large, low-income families.

The changed conditions spring from the overall housing market, and not just the low-end of the scale. That market is tight from top to bottom, with pressures building on the way down. According to a study of the California Association of Realtors, the 1985 vacancy rate for homes in the Los Angeles/Long Beach area was an extremely low 1.1 percent. What's more, while household incomes in the state as a whole rose 70 percent between 1970 and 1980, the median price of a home rose 170 percent. As a result, the rate of home ownership in California now trails the national rate -- 55.9 percent to 66.4 percent. Using a traditional measure of "affordability" -- the ratio of earnings to

cost used by mortgage lenders to qualify potential homebuyers -- the percentage of earnings spent by the median household to purchase a median house rose from 21.1 percent in 1970 to 54.1 percent in 1980.[21]

These seemingly arcane statistics are important to the low-income housing market. High home prices force many to rent instead of buy, and that in turn increases pressure on the rental market. As builders adjust to the changes, more and more low-end stock disappears. Pressures build rapidly across the board, and the city grows less elastic.

Other local trends contribute to the crunch. One was a wave of condominium conversions that moved through the city in the early 1970s, before such changes were regulated. Another is the continuing need to bring much of the city's older housing into compliance with earthquake regulations. Still another is the city's complicated rent-control law, which regulates monthly increases, but allows for decontrol when tenants move.

Expectations of endless growth may be a thing of the past. Growth-control measures now appear frequently on ballots. One such proposal, cutting in half allowable commercial and industrial construction in many parts of Los Angeles, received a 71 percent majority. The city is also considering a plan to sharply restrict new construction permits, due to strains on the sewer system. The city of San Diego has voted to cap the number of housing construction permits at half the 1986 rate. Growing communities such as San Clemente, Oceanside and Carlsbad have placed sharp restrictions on the number of houses that can be built each year.[22]

<u>The Spread of the "Shadow Market"</u> -- Immigration has helped nourish the underground boom in illegal and overcrowded housing in Los Angeles and Southern California in several ways. Communities such as Boyle Heights, the Pico-Union area and cities such as Santa Ana (in Orange County) have long been described as "gateway communities," where recent Mexican and Central American immigrants find "temporary" housing with relatives and friends, and the reassurance of a shared culture.[23] Settlement of Hispanic newcomers has also increased in the once predominantly black areas of South Central Los Angeles in the past two decades, surpassing 20 percent of these areas' population by 1980. That growth, accompanied by a decline of 8 percent in the black population in areas of densest Hispanic settlement, is seen as evidence of tightening competition for affordable housing and Hispanic displacement of blacks.[24]

In the past many of the newcomers moved up and out of gateway communities as they climb the economic ladder. Since the 1970s, however, immigrants have come to these communities in greater numbers but with fewer skills and less adaptability than those before. Studies by immigration scholars George Borjas and Dr. Barry Chiswick suggest that wage levels for those coming to the U.S. in this period will remain substantially below those of natives throughout their working lives.[25] This slackening mobility of immigrants may be a

factor in in the expansion of ethnic "enclaves." A shortage of affordable housing elsewhere and the presence of widespread discrimination further compounds the problem.

For undocumented families, there is a roobst network of landlords willing to cut corners. They often ignore credit and reference checks and waive the normal first- and last-month deposits. Rents are typically paid in cash, often on a per-head basis. Landlords can profit from these arrangements by spending little or nothing to comply with laws governing sanitation, zoning and safety, allowing overcrowding or by reporting only part of the cash received as rent. Disputes over conditions can be met with the threat of immediate eviction, since these illegal tenants have virtually no rights. Openings in these dwellings can be filled quickly, by word-of-mouth,[25] in much the same way that openings in low-paying industries dominated by low-wage immigrants are filled.

As in the area's job market, these practices give low income immigrants some advantages over low-income Americans in the competition for the shrinking supply of low-cost housing. The low-wage immigrants, particularly if undocumented, tend to have lower housing expectations and, from their initial perspective as temporary sojourners, are more acquiescent in substandard arrangements. These traits, and the aliens' general defenselessness, make them a preferred clientele to some landlords. Hispanic immigrants tend also to have larger families and, along with Southeast Asian migrants a greater cultural affinity for multi-generational, multi-family arrangements.

The result is intense overcrowding -- what has been called "Hidden Homelessness." Public interest lawyers who challenge local occupancy laws have claimed that as many as eighteen low-wage immigrants have been found in one-bedroom apartments, particularly in the Pico-Union and East Hollywood areas. The 1980 Census showed 11.2 percent of the housing units in the Los Angeles/Long Beach metropolitan statistical area met the definition of "crowded" with more than one person per room, the highest in California, and higher than the proportion of crowded units in New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C.

The housing plight of illegal immigrants is, if anything, worsening. Los Angeles is now host to as many as a half-million Central Americans, many of whom came in the 1980s.[27] In Pico/Union area near downtown Los Angeles, for instance, thousands of Central American immigrants have arrived in the last several years, according to various independent refugee organizations. Few qualify for legal resident status. Most have paid much of what little money they began with to "coyotes" or alien smugglers to lead them through Mexico and across the border. Thus impoverished, these newcomers have no choice but to live in extremely crowded conditions. Those who manage to leave the area, typically learn of underground vacancies through friends or relatives, or from advertisements in laundromats or local stores. Garages tend to be slightly cheaper than even the shoddiest of one-bedroom apartments, and they offer privacy.[28]

Declining Housing Standards -- Spokesmen for Los Angeles City agencies responsible for policing code violations admit that they are ill equipped to handle the resulting crush. The City's Compliance Bureau, with twenty-five inspectors, is charged with responding to residential and zoning violations. Delays of several months are said to be commonplace. Even then, assuring compliance is often problematic.[29]

Adding to these difficulties is the widely-held belief that strict enforcement of city housing laws could greatly aggravate the city's homeless problem. Many who work to ease the housing problems of immigrants and the native poor are wary of investigations into overcrowding for reasons ranging from fears of being labeled racist to an inability to provide any workable alternatives.

Still, in some of the incorporated areas surrounded by and adjacent to Los Angeles, enforcement has stiffened. In Lynwood, authorities report that they received more than 300 complaints of illegal garage conversions between December 1986 and June 1987. In Southgate, officials estimate that about 900 families have been evicted from illegal dwellings in the last three years.[30] In Orange County, the City of Santa Ana began a controversial program of rigid code enforcement two years ago, aimed at neighborhoods primarily populated by that city's Hispanic community.

A recent study by Dr. W.C. Baer, of the School of Urban Planning at USC finds the outlook bleak. Baer concludes that the combination of intense immigration, heavy foreign investment and an increasingly skewed housing market is introducing a number of "third-world" characteristics into Los Angeles, including increasingly severe segregation, poor neighborhoods that are coming to resemble "squatter communities," and a gradual "re-ghettoization" of the city's urban cores. According to Baer, these trends have overwhelmed state and local programs designed to move the region away from just such conditions.[31]

In the SCAG report, Regional Planner Joe Carreras expects that "the next twenty years promise to bring changes in our residential living patterns as dramatic as those that occurred over the last twenty years." Among the changes expected by Carreras are possible further increases in overcrowding and spiraling rents, and the rising prominence of housing costs as an issue.

Nationally and in Los Angeles, there is an immediate need for comprehensive, detailed information regarding the low-income housing market. Though the city recently appointed a housing coordinator charged with doing just that, this coordinator has described current knowledge as "totally inadequate."[32]

Easing the crisis in Los Angeles will prove difficult. In an effort to ease the stress of life in shadow market housing, for example, activists and academics have repeatedly proposed that zoning

codes be relaxed, effectively trading increased density for a reduction in substandard units. Increasingly, however, communities zealously fight such zoning changes. Given the support for the recent referendum limiting commercial construction in much of Los Angeles, a long-time City Council president's loss of his seat to a relatively unknown "slow-growth" candidate, rigid community opposition to "transitional housing" units, and the generally strong suburban ethic here, it seems highly unlikely that the "shadow market" will be legalized anytime soon.

The question of increased enforcement is no less complex. Los Angeles in particular appears to lack the money, manpower and will to enforce its codes more strictly. In Orange County, efforts to inspect and enforce housing codes in heavily-Hispanic low-income neighborhoods have been challenged as racist and unfair.

Efforts to slow the demolition of the region's older units usually anger the building industry, which sees delays and moratoriums as a major cause of the lack of new low-income housing.[50]

Conclusions and Options -- Nearly two decades of heavy low-skill immigration into the region, much of it illegal, has aggravated a troubling shortage of low-cost housing having its roots in other social and economic changes. Some landlords have gained from immigrant pressures on low-cost housing and employers of low-skill labor are indirect beneficiaries. But the hidden and long term costs are borne by citizens and legal resident seekers of low-cost housing, by non-rental homeowners in some ethnic neighborhoods in the form of lowered property values, by federal, state and particularly local treasuries, and by the general urban environment and quality of life.

Clearly, the housing problems of the nation and Los Angeles demand more responsive policies to channel public and private resources into low-cost housing and to protect the existing stock.[51] But the complicating factor of rapid immigration must also be addressed if Los Angeles and similarly affected cities are to avoid a treadmill. In the absence of more effective management of immigration, generous expansion of low-cost housing in Los Angeles could simply become another magnet for more illegal immigrant settlement. Even with abundant investment or subsidies, and the best of good will, Los Angeles cannot house adequately more than a modest share of the poor and the restless of Mexico and the Caribbean basin.

Stepped up enforcement of existing immigration controls and tighter coordination between immigration and urban development policies could help ease the pressure on low cost housing while lasting solutions are sought. Possible approaches deserving consideration would include:

- Sustained, vigorous application of the employer sanctions provided in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) to reduce the magnetic pull of the Los Angeles labor market to illegals, along with continued improvement of border controls.

- A clear priority in all jurisdictions for U.S. citizen or legal resident family heads for publicly-assisted housing or subsidies, backed up by firm application of the federal Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) enacted in IRCA and reaffirmed in the 1987 Housing Act, to all forms of housing assistance to protect the entitlements of citizens and reduce public housing as an attraction to illegal immigration.

- Subjecting legal alien applicants for publicly assisted housing to the same statutory eligibility conditions now required of them for other forms of federal public assistance. The so-called "deeming provisions" require that the resources of legal aliens' sponsors be considered first in determining the aliens need for "social welfare assistance" during his first three years in the U.S. Similar means testing should be required for housing assistance.

- More concern from Washington policy makers about the housing implications of immigration. Not one of the many congressional hearings on immigration since 1980 has seriously addressed housing. IRCA now requires housing to be among the features assessed in a triennial comprehensive report on immigration's social and economic effects. Congressional overseers should insist on a thorough interagency analysis on this point and direct a General Accounting Office study of immigration's effects on low cost housing in heavily impacted cities. The State Department must give more attention to housing in its annual assessment required by the Refugee Act of the "social, economic and demographic" impact of refugee admissions.

- Renewed efforts by government and voluntary agencies to encourage dispersal of legal immigrants and refugees away from areas of high concentration such as Los Angeles and Orange County, and to find new incentives for their more even distribution across the country.

- Legislation to require INS and the Labor Department, in consultation with HUD, to consider housing consequences along with the labor market effects in authorizing the importation of foreign workers. Petitions in 1987 to the U.S. Labor Department for temporary foreign workers for the Los Angeles garment industry at wages of $6.00 an hour or less, for example, would have obvious implications for the area's hard pressed low-cost housing market.

- More attention by states and particularly local jurisdictions to the inter-linked housing and immigration consequences of their zoning, licensing, development and industrial incentives policies. In Los Angeles, the existence of welcoming low-wage labor-intensive industries has lured heavy illegal immigration. At the same time, the nearby presence of a large cheap illegal alien labor pool has itself influenced the direction of the area's commercial and industrial development.

- More stringent enforcement of local housing codes, combined with community outreach to the area's hundreds of thousands of soon to be legalized aliens to assist them to assert their tenant's rights against exploitive or negligent landlords or to exercise their options for relocation to higher quality housing in less congested areas.

- A strengthening of anti-discrimination laws and enforcement machinery to protect the rights of Hispanic Americans and other minority citizens.

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7. "Mexican Immigrants in Southern California."

8. "Garages Are Homes to Low-Income Thousands," Los Angeles Times, 24 May 1987, Chavez, Quinn.

9. "Living in Garages and Trailers: Poor Forced into Substandard Housing," Rangel, Snaow, August 23, 1987, Santa Ana Register, Santa Ana; "It's Relocation Time for 17 Families in Santa Ana, - Santa Ana Register, June 15, 1987.

10. "Council OKs Occupancy Limits on Rental Units," 13 December 1986, Merina, Los Angeles Times.

11. The New York City Bar Association, in an April 1987 position paper, opposed enactment of HUD regulations evicting illegal aliens. Robert Zampino, former director of the Los Angeles Housing Authority, told the Los Angeles Times on April 1, 1986 that it was impossible to determine how many illegal immigrants were among the 120,000 residents of the city's 31,000 federally subsidized units because housing officials are not permitted to ask whether residents are illegal aliens. By the New York Bar Association's estimate of 40 percent, Los Angeles would have 48,000 persons in housing with ineligible aliens.

12. Homeless estimates from a telephone interview with Grace Davis, Deputy Mayor, City of Los Angeles.

13. U.S. Conference of Mayors: "Continuing Growth of Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty in American Cities: a 26-City Survey." December 1987.

14. "Southern California: A Region in Transition: Volume Two: Impacts of Present and Future Immigration," Southern California Association of Governments, Los Angeles, CA, December, 1984.

15. "At Risk of Loss, The Endangered Future of Low-Income Rental Housing Resources," Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, May, 1987, Clay.

16. "The Fourth Wave;" see also "Background and Characteristics of Undocumented Hispanic Migrants to the United States: A Review of Recent Research," Massey, Schnabel, Migration Today, Vol. XI., No. 1, 1983.

17. Evidence of housing discrimination against Hispanics was cited by Raul Yzaguirre, President, National Council of La Raza, in testimony before the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the Committee on the Judiciary, in support of the Fair Housing Act of 1987. Specifically, Yzaguirre cited a 1979 HUD study in Dallas which found that 96 percent of dark-skinned Mexican Americans faced housing discrimination in a typical housing search; a 1982 HUD study in Denver which sound that both blacks and hispanics tend to receive less information about available housing than whites; and a 1986 HUD-funded study in Phoenix which found evidence of discriminatory rental practices against both blacks and hispanics in the areas of financial treatment.

18. Passel, Dr. J.S.: Statement of the Census Bureau before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, September 11, 1985.

19. SCAG: A Region in Transition.

20. Woodrow, K. and Passel (Census Bureau) and Warren, R. (Immigration and Naturalization Service): Recent Immigration to the U.S. -- Legal and Undocumented: Analysis of Data from the June 1986 Current Population Survey; Washington, D.C., 1987 (unpublished).

21. "Future of California's Resale Market," California Association of Realtors, December 1986.

22. Examples taken from "California Towns Vote to Restrict Expansion As Services Lag Behind," Wall Street Journal, 11 November 1987, Rose.

23. The description of Boyle Heights, Pico-Union and El Salvador as "gateway communities" is based on interviews with a variety of social workers, particularly those at El Rescate, a Los Angeles based service agency run by the Southern California Ecumenical Council.

24. "Inter-Ethnic Conflict in an Urban Ghetto: The Case of Blacks and Latinos in Los Angeles," Oliver and Johnson, Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change, Vol. 6, 1984.

25. Borjas and Marta Tienda: "Economic Consequences of Immigration," Science, 6 February 1987: Chiswick: "Is the New Immigration Less Skilled than the Old?" Journal of Labor Economics, April 1986.

26. This scenario, based on interviews with a series of social workers, repeats the findings of Quinn and Chavez in the 24 May, Los Angeles Times article.

27. Ruggles, "Profile of the Central America Population in the U.S.," Urban Institute: Washington, 1985.

28. From the 22 July 1987 Los Angeles Times and 15 December 1987 Los Angeles Herald-Examiner articles.

29. From the Quinn, Chavez, 24 May Los Angeles Times article.

30. From the 22 June 1987 Time article.

31. Baers, "Housing in an Internationalizing Region: Housing Stock Dynamics in Southern California and The Dilemmas of Fair Share," Environment and Planning, Society and Space, 1986, Volume 4, 1986.

32. From a telephone interview with Gary Squiers, Housing Coordinator, City of Los Angeles.

33. The most recent of these proposals in Los Angeles is a complex plan to divert some property taxes paid by developers into construction of low-income housing.